

Overrating the Peril of a Few More Spies

The problem is to achieve a mood and an arrangement whereby, at the very least, this awful force will never be used. At most, the problem is to find a way whereby—as Red China has feared aloud and Undersecretary Katzenbach the other day hoped aloud—the two giants can join to prevent smaller nations now coming to possess nuclear weapons from ever using them.

People who have studied the spy business in depth think Mr. Hoover's objections are misconceived. In modern times spies do not have serious trouble getting information in any country, for it is nearly impossible to keep clues out of newspapers and speeches.

Getting the information is not hard. The problem lies in interpreting it accurately. Correct and relevant information is generally lost in a maze of irrelevant information. It is hard to estimate which is decoy and which is genuine.

ed to the victim-nation. Russia was told weeks beforehand when and where Hitler would invade her soil. Stalin did not take the information seriously. The U.S. knew all it had to know to get our fleet and planes out of Pearl Harbor, but underestimated the validity of the information. Hitler was given the date and place of the allied invasion of Normandy by his spies, but gave it no higher value than a host of rumors, and therefore was caught out.

An increase in the number of Russian spies is therefore not likely to matter greatly. It would be a pity to let the fear of it cause us to fail to take action to improve relations now that action is possible.

Russian leaders appear to feel every day of its age, and would like to relax and derive a little more well-being from their economy and settle troubles rather than start them.

The other development has been the national nervous breakdown of Red China. As the London Economist observed recently, the so-called "Cultural Revolution" is giving all revolutions a bad name, and we may see that mode of changing things go out of favor in the world for the first time since 1789. Meanwhile, Russia is clearly so anxious to devote close attention to her border with China that she would like to stabilize relations elsewhere.

If we are to miss the chance to improve relations, we should have very good reasons for missing it. Mr. Hoover's fear of a dozen more spies is not a good reason.